

Project Brief :Smallholder Horticulture in Victoria Falls

By Greenline Africa in collaboration with AGRITEX¹

Project context: The project area lies in a rural communal area adjacent to Victoria Falls town, an international tourist resort located in the north-western part of Hwange district, in Zimbabwe. The district has a rural population of about 80,305 people, with more than 80% of this population living below the poverty datum line, majority of whom are smallholder subsistence farmers. This is a low-lying area located within the country's agro-ecological region V, where temperatures reach 35°C to 40°C during the October to February summer months and a low of 15°C to 20°C in winter between the months of May and July. The region is dominated by Kalahari sands and receives erratic annual precipitation between 450mm and 650mm which is increasingly accompanied by mid-summer dry spells. As a result, agricultural productivity is very low for the staple cereal crops commonly produced, namely maize, sorghum and millet, trapping smallholder farmers in a cycle of poverty and food insecurity, in the face of a changing climate. Groundwater table in the region is generally low and not easily reachable through conventional wells, making irrigation a costly option for the resource poor farming communities.

The existence of a thriving tourism industry in Victoria Falls, presence an opportunity to transform the smallholder farming community adjacent to the town, from subsistence farming to high value sustainable farming system. In pursuit of this opportunity, the project initiative by Greenline Africa Trust² in collaboration with AGRITEX,

seeks to forge strategic partnerships between smallholder farmers, hotel chain industry and government institutions, through the concept of a Community Centre which is a hub for technology innovation, knowledge and skills transfer, and market linkages.

Project overview: The project initiative started with the establishment of the Dibutibu Community Centre, which supports smallholder farming community adjacent to the Victoria Falls town to engage in high value vegetable production for the urban community and tourism industry. Key interventions for the vegetable production initiative include:

- Identifying smallholder farmers in landscapes conducive for vegetable production, and supporting them to establish horticulture enterprises in collaboration with private sector actors;
- Capacity building of smallholder farmers and local government institutions to adopt relevant technologies suitable for production and marketing of high value vegetable crops; and

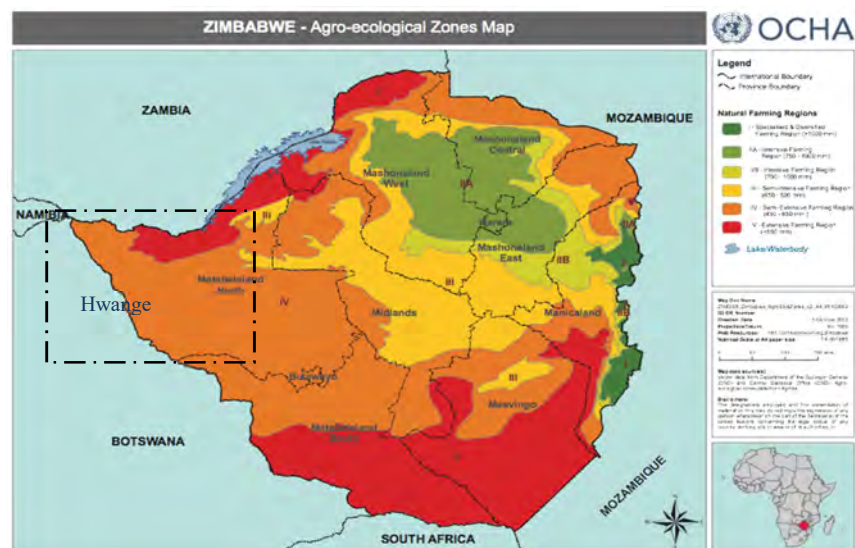


Figure 1: Project location

¹ Agriculture and Technical Extension Services

² Greenline Africa Trust is a local organization established in 2015.

c. Facilitating the aggregation of horticulture produce from participating smallholder farmers and supplying hotels, lodges and vegetable retailers in Victoria Falls town.

Smallholder vegetable production: The project engages with smallholder farmers who are willing and have the capacity to venture into horticulture enterprise development. Key considerations for project participants include quality of soils, water accessibility, labour and ability to maintain and pay-back capital costs for the drip irrigation facilities.

Capacity building: Training on improved technologies for soil and water management, such as drip irrigation system, is a key element of the project being provided at the Community Centre.



Figure 2: Drip irrigation facility at Community Centre



Figure 3: Smallholder vegetable plot

Challenges: The high temperatures during the summer season contribute to post-harvest losses in the absence of a cooling system. Given that the project is in its inception phase, transportation is a challenge, which over the years should be rectified through the expansion of the horticulture venture to a scale that is beneficial for both the farmers and transporters.

Opportunities: The project has potential to scale-up through strategic partnerships, and the development and nurturing of sustainable and profitable agricultural value chains. Over time, the project can also contribute towards the body of knowledge around sustainable production systems for smallholder farmers in Africa.

Market linkages: Farmers aggregate their produce every Monday and Thursday each week through the Centre, to meet orders from the buyers. The Centre facilitates delivery of horticulture produce every Tuesday and Friday to buyers in Victoria Falls.



Figure 4: Hotel chefs, users of produce